



# Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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## Gulf of Maine Recreational Cod and Haddock Fishermen

Changes to regulations

New minimum fish sizes, daily per angler bag limits, and fishing seasons

*Effective Date: May 1, 2014*

***RE-ISSUE of BULLETIN--POSSESSION PROHIBITION DATES CORRECTED***

We are implementing the following interim Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod and haddock recreational management measures. These are the minimum fish sizes, per angler daily possession (bag) limits, and fishing seasons for when these two stocks can be kept. The measures are applicable for the GOM regulated mesh area. These measures will remain in place for the 2014 fishing year (May 1, 2014, to April 30, 2015) or until replaced by other measures. If measures are changed at a later date, an additional bulletin will be issued and widely distributed.

### 2014 Gulf of Maine Recreational Measures:

Cod:

- The minimum fish size **increases** to 21 inches.
- The daily per angler bag limit is **not changing** and remains 9 fish per day.
- Possession prohibited (closed season) **increases** by 2 months: now September 1, 2014 - April 14, 2015. Possession of cod in the GOM regulated mesh area is permitted May 1-August 31, 2014, and April 15-30, 2015.

Haddock:

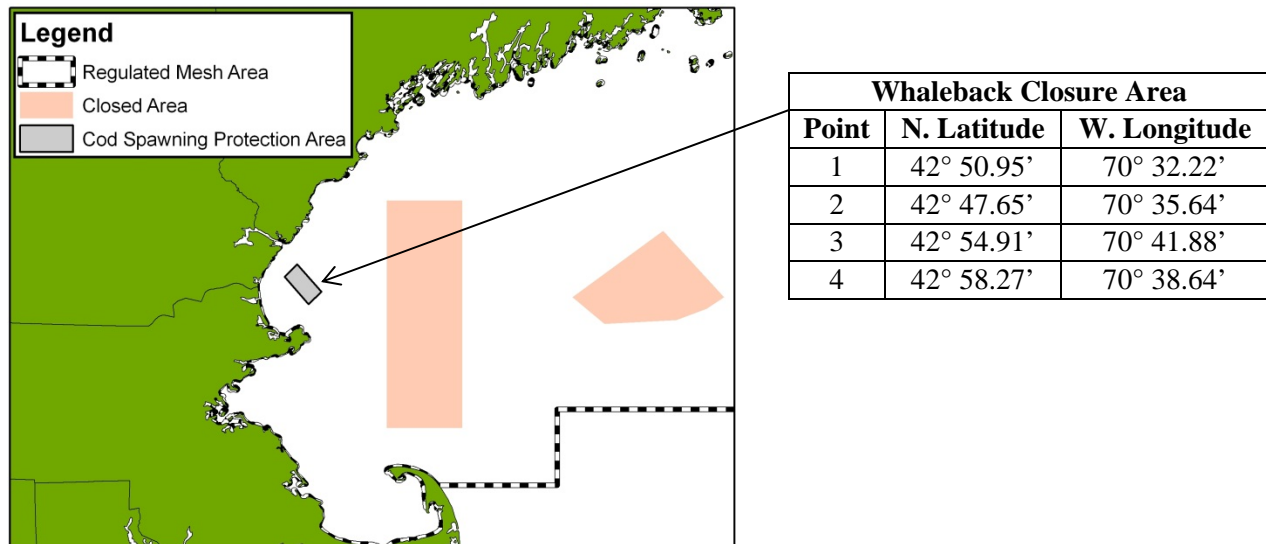
- The minimum fish size is **not changing** and remains 21 inches.
- The daily per angler bag limit is **decreasing** from an unlimited amount to 3 fish per day.
- Possession prohibited (closed season) **increases** by 4 months: September 1-November 30, 2014, and March 1- April 30, 2015. Possession of haddock in the GOM regulated mesh area is permitted May 1-August 31, 2014, and December 1, 2014-February 28, 2015.

FY 2014 Gulf of Maine Regulated Mesh Area Recreational Fishery Measures

Species	Daily Bag Limit (fish per angler)	Minimum Fish Size, Inches (cm)	Retention Prohibited (closure periods)
Cod	9	21 (53.34)	September 1, 2014 - April 14, 2015
Haddock	3	21 (53.34)	September 1-November 30, 2014 and March 1 – April 30, 2015

*For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Greater Atlantic Region.*

The Whaleback Closure Area (called the cod spawning protection area in regulation) for GOM cod (see chart below, gray box) **is not changing**. Possession of cod while fishing in this area remains prohibited April 1 through June 30.



<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	
<b>Why are these changes being implemented?</b>	The recreational catch of both GOM cod and haddock exceeded the catch limit in place for FY 2013. Because the FY 2013 recreational overage was substantial, significant changes in management measures are needed to ensure the recreational fishery does not exceed its catch limit again in FY 2014.
<b>Why is the haddock bag limit so low for this year?</b>	<p>A very small bag limit is required to sufficiently reduce recreational haddock catch and prevent additional quota overages. Analysis shows that many anglers encounter and keep only small numbers of haddock. The available information for FY 2013 shows that, on average, less than one haddock was kept per angler. As a result, changing the bag limit for haddock from unlimited to 10 fish per angler, for example, would not reduce catch because anglers keep far less than 10 haddock.</p> <p>Allowing four or more haddock to be kept would require implementing larger minimum fish size and/or more seasonal closures. We heard clearly at the Council meeting that a haddock size limit larger than 21 inches would only result in a lot of discards and potential noncompliance. We also heard the preference for changes in the bag limit paired with a fall (September-October) closure. A 21-inch size limit and fall closure alone did not ensure a strong enough likelihood that the catch limit wouldn't be exceeded in FY 2014.</p>
<b>How is a day defined for per angler bag limits?</b>	Any trip longer than 15 hours and covering 2 consecutive calendar days is considered more than 1 day. Similarly, any trip longer than 39 hours and covering 3 consecutive calendar days is considered more than 2 days and, so on, in a similar fashion.
<b>Can I continue to fish after catching my bag limit or during</b>	Yes, you can continue to fish after keeping your daily bag limit; however, you may only catch and release. We have a guide for catch and release written for large pelagic species ( <a href="http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/Careful_release_brochure.pdf">http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/Careful_release_brochure.pdf</a> ) but much of the information is applicable to any catch-and-release fishery.

<b>closed seasons?</b>	You may fish during closed seasons; however, possession of recreationally caught GOM cod from September 1, 2014 – April 14, 2015, is prohibited. Possession of recreationally caught GOM haddock is prohibited from September 1, 2014 – April 30, 2015.
<b>How were these measures developed?</b>	We consulted with the New England Council and its Recreational Advisory Panel to develop these measures, and we tried to incorporate their recommendations as much as possible. We are implementing measures that are more restrictive than either group's recommendations because we have to ensure that measures have at least a 50-percent chance of reducing catch to the FY 2014 recreational catch limits. Neither group's recommendations would have achieved this level of probability.
<b>What data are used to make these decisions?</b>	We use information from the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), a multi-faceted survey system that is used to collect information on recreational fishing catch and effort. The data are publicly available: <a href="http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/queries/">http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/recreational/queries/</a> . When estimates are generated, a confidence interval around the median value in the range is provided. We use the midpoint values in our evaluations. While some components of the fishery, such as shore-based fishing by private anglers, may have large confidence intervals, when the data are aggregated to higher levels they are more precise. For example, the estimate for GOM cod for all anglers fishing on all types of vessels is more precise than an estimate for private anglers fishing from shore. The data are extensively evaluated internally and with external partners. No anomalies were noted in the preliminary FY 2013 estimates. As we are required to do, we determined that they are the best scientific information available.
<b>Weren't errors recently detected in MRIP data? What effect did the revisions have on GOM cod and haddock?</b>	Yes, recently a data processing error was detected in MRIP that affected processing of length-weight information. We re-ran the data back to 2003. Estimates of effort and catch in numbers of fish were not changed. The error has a variable effect on all length-weight related estimates. We evaluated the potential impact the re-estimation may have had on GOM cod and haddock. In some periods the length and weight of fish caught decreased: in others, the changes resulted in increased catch. None of the changes were significant and had only negligible changes to the FY 2013 estimated catch or the projected effectiveness of the measures we are implementing.
<b>Why didn't you issue a proposed rule?</b>	The necessary information to evaluate FY 2013 recreational catch through October 2013 was not available until mid-December 2013. Thus, due to data availability, and necessary consultations with the Council to develop measures, it was impossible to implement measures by May 1, 2014, through a proposed and final rule process. We expect that a lot of fishing will occur in May. If these new measures were not in place very early in May, then even more restrictive measures would have been necessary to ensure the catch limits aren't exceeded. We thought the public interest was better served by trying to provide some advance notice of the changes going in place on May 1, even though this meant not providing an opportunity to review and comment on the measures before they became effective. In addition, states often require some amount of time to implement changes to be consistent with Federal measures. We are taking comment on the interim measures. The need for a change and the relative magnitude of the reduction necessary as well as the types of measures being considered were widely discussed in the public RAP and Council meetings.
<b>How will the upcoming GOM haddock assessment change things?</b>	We cannot predict the outcome of the assessment. When we receive the final results of the assessment, we will consider the public input we received on these interim measures, as well as any new information about the stock that comes from the haddock assessment. If warranted, there is a chance we would modify recreational management measures based on the results of the assessment. We expect the final results of the assessment to be available in late summer 2014. You can check the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's web page for more information on the GOM haddock assessment as it becomes available: <a href="http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/reports.html">http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/saw/reports.html</a> .